

Looking Forward *by Julie Bear*



Photo: Michelle Pettit

Thank all of you, our friends and members, once again for your generous support and unending commitment. While we paused to celebrate our 5th anniversary, five completed projects, and the visionary landowners we've had the privilege to work with, we now turn our attention to a busy and bright future here at the ESLT. We are actively engaged in several new land protection agreements including:

- an agricultural property,
- a fourth parcel in the Round Valley Mule Deer Migration Corridor, and
- a historical, scenic, and ranching land in Mono County.

In addition, our work protecting some of the land owned by LADWP in the Eastern Sierra continues as well as a myriad of other potential land projects that have appeared on our horizon. Fundamental to all of this lasting work is building and sustaining our organization's capacity, for the past and future accomplishments of ESLT rest in the hearts and hands of all our dedicated members, selfless volunteers, and skilled staff. Time is critical, our work is urgent...together we are building a brighter promise for ourselves and our future. ■



ESLT's First Five

5 LAND PROTECTION AGREEMENTS IN 5 YEARS *by Michelle Pettit*

In the growth of a land trust, an indicator of stability and success is the number of land protection agreements a land trust is able to secure in its early stages. We're thrilled to announce that we have now completed five land protection agreements—in our first five years!

To some of you, this is no surprise as you may have heard how busy we've been—for at the end of last year, we were furiously finishing two new agreements.

The first, located in Bridgeport, is a scenic corridor land protection agreement on Big Hot Springs Ranch donated by landowners Uli Schmidt-Maybach, Glen Poulsen and Andreas Richenbach. Now 75 acres along Highway 395 just south of Bridgeport will remain scenic, protecting wildlife in the area and limiting development along the corridor.

The second is an effort we've been working on for well over a year: the preservation of 818 acres of organic alfalfa farmland on Montgomery Creek Ranch in Benton Valley. Owned by Dave and Diane Doonan, the ranch lies in the agricultural heartland on Highway 6 just south of Benton. Once purchased for water exportation, the Doonans, through the agreement, will ensure not only that the ranch will remain in agriculture, but also that the ranch's water rights will be forever tied to the property.

Both of these new land protection agreements—which bring the total number of acres protected to just under 1,000—establish a solid foundation for future growth and help build momentum in our other program areas. We could not have done it without the passion of Eastern Sierra landowners to preserve their land, but moreover, we wouldn't be here without your support—thank you for five years of progress and preservation!

Read more about the completed land protection agreements on our web site: www.eslt.org. ■

Land and Legacy:

ESLT MEMBERS CELEBRATE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

by Stephen Ingram and Michelle Pettit

On Sunday, January 29, over 150 of you joined us at the Mountain Light Gallery to celebrate our Fifth Anniversary. It was so nice to celebrate with old friends and meet new ones. In a note the following day, member Liz Flemming summed it up best: "Everything was great—food, music and the silent auction too. But I especially liked visiting with so many 'kindred spirits.' It was an uplifting event—thank you."

Not only was the evening enjoyable but the silent auction helped raise over \$3,000. Artwork, food, drinks, and other services were donated by: Avalon Winery, Black Sheep Coffee, Linda Dore Food Service, Eastern Sierra Native Plants, Greengrass Groove, Hunewill Guest Ranch, In-Touch Massage, Stephen Ingram Nature Photography, Inyo Council for the Arts, Rick Kattelmann, Kevin Klinefelter, Mammoth Brewing Company, Linda McNeill, Cheyenne McAfee, The Mono Lake Committee, Galen Rowell/Mountain Light Photography, Dennis Oakeshott, Rock Rabbit Winery, Skadi Restaurant, Sorenson's Resort, and Wilson's Eastside Sports.

Volunteers included Phyllis Benham, Annie Cashner, Leslie Chapman, Lynn Cooper, Dana Ellis, Alisa and Todd Ellsworth, Jim Fox, Ann Klinefelter, Todd Lassich, Jeanne Oakeshott, Diana and Alan Pietrasanta, Pat Pontak, Sarah Sheehan, Sherryl Taylor, as well as ESLT staff and board members. Thank you all!

We have pictures to prove it! See if our roving photographers caught you on film: www.eslt.org.



Photo: Annie Cashner



Photo: Tammy Branston

Meet our new Membership Coordinator

We are sorry to say goodbye to Lynnette Royce as our Membership Coordinator—thank you Lynnette for your many, many contributions to a growing land trust. We will miss you.

Please join us in welcoming Tammy Branston as our new Membership Coordinator. Tammy comes to us from Humboldt County and divides her time between ESLT and the Department of Fish and Game. Welcome Tammy! ■

The mission of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust is to protect and enhance vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, recreational, agricultural, historical, botanic and wildlife values.

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Sierra Century Update *by Julie Bear*

Another piece of history was recently added to the over one-hundred year saga between the Eastern Sierra and the City of Los Angeles. What began in the early 1900s as an exploration for water resources for the burgeoning City, resulted in an "engineering triumph." The largest aqueduct in the Western Hemisphere was built, a feat second only to the Panama Canal. Not only was a water source secured, but almost by accident a vast region of accessible open space and pastoral ranch and farmlands was created.

The last week in April found an unprecedented number of Los Angeles officials visiting their watershed and meeting with various Eastern Sierra groups—including the ESLT—to discuss topics of mutual interest and concern. Of utmost importance to the ESLT is the idea of permanent protection for some of LA's lands, allowing them to always remain open and accessible. The continuance of farming and ranching in the region is also a desirable outcome to any plan that would eliminate potential subdivision or development

of these lands. As a result of this latest round of talks the LADWP Commissioners tasked a regional working group to develop a proposal to begin a cooperative effort to finally address this long-held vision in a formal, public process. The working group will meet soon to identify other participants, discuss a potential pilot project, and begin developing a framework for this exciting opportunity.

Join Sierra Century Supporters to help our efforts: www.easternsierralandtrust.org/Pages/SCentury.htm. ■

The Flight of the Lady by Tammy Branston

As spring approaches in the Eastern Sierra, warmer weather brings about the emergence of wildflowers and greenery—an attractive and important habitat for many pollinating insects, including migrating butterflies such as the Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*).

Painted Ladies are unique in that they have only four functional legs: their forelegs are modified into organs used to “taste” nectar from host plants. This colorful butterfly takes advantage of vegetation such as thistles and fiddleneck in large, open areas. The ESLT preserves these types of habitats so that many species, including the Painted Lady, can continue to persevere.

Last year, millions of painted ladies fluttered through the Eastern Sierra. This phenomenon proved to be one of the largest migrations on record for the species and was thought to be caused by exceptionally high winter rainfall in Baja California, where these butterflies spend their winter. Unlike monarch butterflies, painted ladies have sporadic migration, remaining at their wintering sites during years of drought and migrating only during years of high rainfall. Fueling a population boom, plentiful rain supports a larger crop of plants for the Painted Lady caterpillars to eat. A larger population then influences this species to migrate farther north than they generally would in search of plentiful vegetation on which to feed and lay their eggs.

Due to the lower amount of precipitation this year we aren't experiencing the “Flight of the Lady” in such plentiful numbers as we did in 2005. But as long as open space remains, we can surely look forward to seeing massive migrations of these beautiful butterflies in future years. ■



Photo: Bruce Martin

Preserve the Balance: Secure Safe Passage for Sierra Wildlife by Michelle Pettit

We live and recreate in the Eastern Sierra because it is a land of dramatic landscapes, scenic vistas, and timeless beauty. The tranquility of birds singing, water rushing over stones and logs, and leaves rustling in valley breezes evokes a sense of balance that soothes our soul.

The Eastern Sierra has resisted disruption of this serenity for many years, though the demands of increasing recreational use, rising land and home values, and growing desirability are slowly bringing changes to the East side that we want to balance.

As a result, today we are asking for your support to help us preserve balance along the Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Area by securing safe passage for Sierra wildlife.

NATURAL BALANCE Many animals migrate through the Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Area to access winter forage and shelter—and along the way both predators and prey rely on food sources in the migration corridor. Help us maintain a natural balance that will ensure healthy animal populations and keep both

predators and prey from encroaching on populated areas for food.



Photo: Stephen Ingram

HUMAN BALANCE Help us support our human balance by ensuring habitat for migrating animals which includes not only forage and hiding cover, but also a buffer from the effects of increased human presence such as harassment of animals by dogs, vehicles, noise, and lighting. Preserving a human balance also helps to keep deer and other animals off US Highway 395, where a number of highway accidents each year are caused by collisions with deer.

REGIONAL BALANCE Our region's recreation and tourism economy is dependent on the quality of hiking, fishing, hunting,

bird watching and other activities that directly or indirectly involve Sierra wildlife. Migrating animals in the Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Area come from many areas throughout the High Sierra and their safety and survival impacts a regional balance that is important to our economy.

OPPORTUNITY FOR BALANCE Right now we have the opportunity to expand protected land in the Wheeler Ridge Wildlife Area and we need your help. An additional 10 acres contiguous to the currently-protected 62 acres will link these lands and secure a larger permanent passage for migrating animals. Efforts here are critical because migrating deer are confined to a passage that is just over one mile wide.

We need \$5,000 to provide matching funds that will secure almost 50 times that in grants for this property. **We need your help. Please help Preserve the Balance and use the enclosed envelope to donate \$50 today. Your contribution will pay off a hundred-fold. Thank you!** ■

ESLT Upcoming Events

Mono Basin Bird and Flower Walk *by Karen Ferrell-Ingram*

Please join us for an exploration of a special place in the heart of the Mono Basin Scenic Area on **June 10 from 8:00-11:00 AM**. Located on DeChambeau Creek, our destination is a rich mosaic of sagebrush scrub and riparian habitats where many types of birds and flowers occur. Our trip will be led by a local ornithologist and a botanical specialist who will help identify the birds and flowers of the Mono Basin. We'll finish up by sharing lunch in the shade while enjoying the views of Mono Lake.

Expect moderate off-trail walking, variable weather, and those good old Mono Basin no-see-'ums! Wear clothing layers, hat, and good shoes, bring water, lunch, binoculars, bird book, bug repellent, sunscreen and a sense of adventure. The ESLT will provide drinks and snacks.

Please call the ESLT at (760) 873-4554 to reserve a place or to get more information. The trip will be limited to 20 and will be free to ESLT members and their guests. There is a \$25 fee for non-members. ■



Photo: Karen Ferrell-Ingram

SAVE THE DATE!

Membership and Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

July 22, 2006 tentatively planned for the Crowley Lake Park

Check our web site for more information coming soon or call us at **760.873.4554**.

Preserving Our Rural Lands

www.eslt.org



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